

# **Guide for refugees**

**Arrival and getting  
started in Olfen**

Published by the  
City of Olfen  
Dept. 5  
Labour, Social Affairs, Integration  
Marktplatz 5  
59399 Olfen  
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**Dear Sir/Madam,**

After fleeing your home country, you've finally made it to Olfen. We hope to make your new start in Olfen as smooth and successful as possible. To assist with this, we have created this guide containing useful contacts, addresses and information that may be particularly useful for you and your family while you're getting settled.

Successful integration ultimately relies on a welcoming community that is willing to accept new people and help them feel welcome and find a new home. Along with finding housing, a warm welcome also includes providing care and education for children and integration in the local job market for adults. On the other hand, refugees must also be willing to respect the values, norms and laws of their new homeland and to become part of their host community.

All laws in place in the Federal Republic of Germany are based on the German Constitution, otherwise known as the Basic Law or 'Grundgesetz'. Every citizen is required to respect the constitution. It states, among other things, that:

- Human dignity shall be inviolable. The duty of all state authority shall be to respect and protect it.
- Every person shall have the right to free development of their personality insofar as they do not violate the rights of others or offend against the constitutional order or the moral law.
- All persons shall be equal before the law. Men and women shall have equal rights. (...) No person shall be favoured or disfavoured because of sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith or religious or political opinions. No person shall be disfavoured because of disability.

- Freedom of faith and of conscience and freedom to profess a religious or philosophical creed shall be inviolable.
- Every person shall have the right to freely express and disseminate their opinions in speech, writing and pictures and to inform themselves without hindrance from generally accessible sources.

In this spirit of peaceful coexistence based on mutual respect and esteem, I hope that you find a safe and cherished new home here in Olfen. I am devoted to helping you achieve this.

Jan-Philipp Schlichtmann

Integration Officer for the City of Olfen

## **1. Welcome to Olfen**

Olfen is a small town located in the south of the district of Coesfeld in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). The ExpressBus offers quick links to the nearby cities of Lüdinghausen, Senden and Münster. The cities of Datteln, Recklinghausen and Dortmund and the rest of the northern Ruhr district are also close by and easy to reach.

Roughly 13,000 people live in Olfen, a town known for its nature. Both the Lippe and Stever rivers cross Olfen. The floodplains of the Stever (Steverauen) are particularly loved by locals as a recreational area.

In April 2023, Olfen is home to around 420 refugees. They include many Ukrainian people who fled to Olfen in 2022. People have also come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, the Western Balkans and Africa.

Asylum seekers and refugees who arrive in Olfen are either housed in private apartments or in one of the shared housing quarters. These include the Marienheim at Oststraße 24, the accommodation buildings at Carl-Benz-Straße 4A and Vinnumer Landweg 1 and 2 along with the house at Hauptstraße 51 in Olfen. People are also occasionally housed at the district-wide facility at Josefshaus in Seppenrade.

## 2. The town hall (Rathaus)

The Rathaus is often the first place refugees go when they arrive in Olfen.

Often known as the yellow house, Marktplatz 5 is home to dept. 5, the Department for Labour, Social Affairs, Integration. The **Social Welfare Office** can be found on the first floor of the **Job Centre**. Anyone who is allocated to the City of Olfen at their initial reception centre will first go to the yellow house.

Then an application is submitted for benefits under the Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz – AsylbLG) or for citizen's income (Bürgergeld) depending on the refugee's current status. The Social Welfare Office will provide clarity on the accommodation situation for refugees.

If a refugee family includes children of school age (up to 18 years), they will also be provided with initial information on registering for school by the Social Welfare Office.

The **Integration Officer** of the City of Olfen also works for Dept. 5. He is the first point of contact for all matters for refugees and offers advice to support better integration in Olfen. Refugees will also receive assistance filling out various applications here (e.g. child benefit applications or applications for the further approval of benefits from the Job Centre). People who do not (yet) have a residence permit can also register for integration and language courses here if certain conditions are met.

People who have moved to Olfen are required to register at the **Citizens' Service Centre** (Kirchstraße 5, ground floor). Once you have registered, you will be issued with a new registered address in Olfen. You will need to register again if you move within Olfen.

People with a residence permit are invited to attend a meeting at the Job Centre within their first three weeks in Olfen. At the **case management** meeting, your case manager will discuss what you need to do to attend a language/integration course or get a job.

People who are looking for a job but need financial support to pay rent can apply for a **housing allowance** and for **benefits for education and participation** (e.g. lunch for children at nursery and school) at the town hall.

### **Contact partners in Dept. 5 and their contact hours:**

Ms Benting  
Head of Dept.  
[benting@olfen.de](mailto:benting@olfen.de)

Mr Schlichmann  
Integration Officer  
Phone: 02595 389 154 or mobile: 0151 675 44374 (also available for SMS or WhatsApp)  
Email: [schlichtmann@olfen.de](mailto:schlichtmann@olfen.de)  
Personal consultation hours: Monday from 10 am at Marienheim, Oststraße 24, first floor  
and by prior appointment

Ms Ozimek  
Administrator of the Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act  
[ozimek@olfen.de](mailto:ozimek@olfen.de)

Mr Schiemann  
Citizen's Income Case Worker (surnames A-J, excluding F)  
[jobcenter@olfen.de](mailto:jobcenter@olfen.de)

Ms Lau  
Citizen's Income Case Worker (surnames K-M)

[jobcenter@olfen.de](mailto:jobcenter@olfen.de)

Mr Schlüter  
Citizen's Income Case Worker (surnames F, N-Z)  
[jobcenter@olfen.de](mailto:jobcenter@olfen.de)

Ms Schönfelder  
Case Manager (surnames A-K)  
[jobcenter@olfen.de](mailto:jobcenter@olfen.de)

Ms Schinkler  
Case Manager (surnames L-K)  
[jobcenter@olfen.de](mailto:jobcenter@olfen.de)

Ms Brüse  
Housing Allowance Case Manager  
[bruese@olfen.de](mailto:bruese@olfen.de)



### 3. Early years education and schools in Olfen

#### Playgroups and nurseries

It's important that children attend a teaching facility when they arrive in Germany to help them learn German and integrate in their new home.

Children up to the age of six typically attend **nursery** (Kita). If your child requires a place in nursery, we will be notified of this requirement when you are allocated to Olfen. However, it isn't always possible to find a place for every child in a nursery right away. Keep in mind that every family is welcome to introduce themselves at a nursery in Olfen and ask whether there are any available places.

Each autumn, families who are yet to find a place at a nursery for their child(ren) will be sent an application form by the city administration for a nursery place for the nursery year starting the following summer. The Integration Officer helps families find a childcare place for their children and to complete the documents required for registration.

Along with nurseries, Olfen also has a number of **playgroups** for children up to the age of three. More information on childcare can be found here:

<https://www.olfen.de/de/freizeit-bildung/kinderbetreuung.html>

Since the beginning of 2023, parents and children can also join the parent-child group '**Griffbereit**' (literally 'close at hand') in Olfen. Along with helping you and your child learn German, the group gives children the opportunity to play and parents can share experiences. The playgroup offers a great addition to attending nursery. Please contact the Integration Officer if you are interested in joining the group.

## Schools

Children are required to attend school from the age of six onwards. Olfen has a **primary school** (years 1 - 4) and a **comprehensive school** (years 5 - 13). Children are registered at the board of education by the Social Welfare Office after being assigned.

The parents are responsible for enrolling their children at a school. This requires getting in touch with the schools:

- ❖ Wieschhofschule –  
Catholic primary school  
Kirchstraße 30  
59399 Olfen  
Phone: 02595 961340  
[info@wieschhofschule.de](mailto:info@wieschhofschule.de)
- ❖ Wolfhelmschule Olfen-Datteln – Comprehensive  
school in Olfen:  
Telgenkamp 9  
59399 Olfen  
Phone: 02595 387380  
(Please contact Ms Anna Baurecht to register your  
child: [anna.baurecht@wolfhelmschule.de](mailto:anna.baurecht@wolfhelmschule.de))

Children who have reached the age of 16 are registered at the Richard-von-Weizäcker **technical college** in Lüdinghausen and typically attend 'Internationale Förderklassen – IFK' (remedial courses for international students).

**Important note:** Applications for education and participation can be made at the Social Welfare Office (for asylum seekers) or at the Job Centre (for people with a residence permit) to cover the costs of school trips, class outings and lunch at nursery or school. The costs will be covered if the application is approved.

Families with school-age children will automatically receive a supplement to their regular benefits twice a year in February and August. The supplement is intended to cover the cost of school materials, e.g. books, exercise books or pencils.

#### 4. Working in Olfen

Olfen is home to numerous companies that employ people with a wide variety of qualifications.

The **St. Vitus foundation** offers care for the elderly and for people in need of nursing care. Employees at the foundation work in nursing, housekeeping, social care and building services.

The **nurseries** and **Wieschhof primary school** hire people to supervise and care for the children. This includes educators along with daily helpers and supervisors.

Several **supermarkets, beverage stores** and other businesses employ people in sales positions and stock replenishment.

There are also **five industrial estates** in Olfen with a wide variety of companies ranging from the construction to events industry, electrical and mechanical engineering, car companies and bike shops. These businesses hire people in both technical and commercial professions.

As a rule, people who have a residence permit are also allowed to look for a job. The Job Centre is responsible for helping people look for jobs along with placing them in language and integration courses. However, everyone must also use their own initiative to find a job. Finding a job is crucial for ensuring your livelihood and gaining financial independence. It's also an important way to integrate in society and helps people learn German, make friends and become a part of the community. The Integration Officer also helps people get in contact with employers.

It is even possible for people without a clarified residence status or people who are permitted to stay/not be deported (asylum seekers) to find a job in certain cases. Along with community service in return for increased social benefits, an application to take up employment can also be submitted to the Foreigners' Registration Office (Ausländerbehörde). The Integration Officer is happy to provide assistance with this.

## 5. Healthcare

Asylum seekers can visit a GP or a dentist after speaking to the Social Welfare Office. They first need to book an appointment at the doctor's surgery and show up at the Social Welfare Office with their appointment, where they will be given a **medical treatment certificate (Krankenbehandlungsschein)**. A referral from a GP is required for specialist treatment (e.g. a cardiologist or gynaecologist). An application for the coverage of costs for various diagnostic and therapeutic procedures (e.g. physiotherapy) must be submitted at the Social Welfare Office **in advance**.

Recipients of citizen's income can apply to a **public health insurance provider** (e.g. AOK, Wolfsberger Str. 27, 59348 Lüdinghausen). To apply for health insurance, please visit the customer service centre of a provider and submit your benefits certificate. You can visit all doctors once insurance coverage begins. All insured individuals receive an insurance card.

Addresses and more information on healthcare can be found here: <https://www.olfen.de/de/rathaus-buergerservice/service-einrichtungen/aerzte-und-apotheken.html>

## 6. Recreation in Olfen

Olfen offers a wide range of fun recreational activities and clubs.

One of the biggest events of the year in Olfen is **carnival**, which culminates with the carnival parade on Nelkendienstag (Clove Tuesday). Carnival is organised by the carnival association KITT in Olfen. It's also celebrated in nurseries and schools.

Olfen has two **swimming pools**. The indoor swimming pool at Von-Vincke-Straße 2 is currently being renovated. The natural swimming pool at Alleeweg 4 is open for every summer season.

**Important note:** Families with three children or more can apply for a family pass to benefit from discounted admission to the natural swimming pool, along with other advantages. The family pass also includes a subsidy for learning materials and school enrolment costs. The Integration Officer is happy to help you with your application. More information is available here: <https://serviceportal.olfen.de/suche/-/egov-bis-detail/dienstleistung/822/show>

SuS Olfen (<https://www.susolfen.de/cms/>) and Westfalia Vinnum (<https://westfalia-vinnum.de/>) are the two major **sports associations** in Olfen. The clubs offer a wide variety of sports for children and adults alike (football, handball, running club, children's gymnastics, Zumba and many more).

Please find an overview of **other associations** (ju-jitsu, Olfen tennis club, marching band, Olfen swimming club, etc.) here: <https://www.olfen.de/de/freizeit-bildung/vereine.html>

**Important note:** Applications for education and participation can also be submitted to cover the costs of membership for a sports club. If approved, a lump sum of €15 is granted each month.

Skateboarders and longboarders can get their money's worth at the **skate park** near the cemetery in the Steverauen (entrance behind the tennis hall, Im Selken 52).

Olfen is also home to 20 **playgrounds** for younger and older kids (including Haydnweg 4, Thomas-Mann-Weg 21, Dammweg 11).

JuZo and the Gaudium are the two **youth centres** in Olfen. The Gaudium in the Protestant community centre at Von-Vincke-Strasse 21 welcomes children aged six to twelve. The JuZO Olfen youth centre in the Leohaus at Billholtstraße 37 gives young people aged 12 and above somewhere to meet up.

Olfen also has three **libraries** where you can borrow books, games or audio material (e.g. Tonies®):

- Protestant library at Von-Vincke-Straße 21 open Thursday 4-5 pm and Sunday 11 am - 12 pm.
- St. Vitus catholic library at Kirchstraße 20 open Wednesday 3-4:30 pm, Friday 10 am - 11 am and Sunday 10 am - 12 pm.



- St. Marien Vinnum catholic library at Hauptstraße 59  
open Sunday from 9:45-10:45 am.

## 7. Other help in Olfen

The **Asylum Seekers' Task Force** can also be an important point of contact for refugees. In addition to a women's café meeting in the Protestant church at Von-Vincke-Straße 21 and an international café in Haus Katharina (Kirchstraße 17), the group offers excursions, events and help in a number of ways. Feel free to get in touch and enquire by email: [ak-asyl-olfen@gmx.de](mailto:ak-asyl-olfen@gmx.de). More information can be found here: <https://fluechtlingshilfeolfen.com/>

The **Kleiderkammer** at Oststraße 24 is always open on Mondays from 1-5 pm and offers clothing and other handy things for everyday life at a low price. Bicycles, furniture and household goods can be purchased here. <https://www.olfen.de/fluechtlinge.html>

The **Olfen food bank** at Von-Vincke-Straße 21 gives out food on Thursdays from 3:30-4:30 pm every week. A benefits certificate is required to shop at the food bank. This certificate is issued for asylum seekers at the Social Welfare Office and at the Job Centre for recipients of citizen's income.

The **community integration centre** provides support with numerous handy tips on the topic of integration and is in particular responsible for taking on more complex cases and queries. Elsa Tönsmann is the contact partner for Olfen (02541 - 18 9419; [elsa.toensmann@kreis-coesfeld.de](mailto:elsa.toensmann@kreis-coesfeld.de)). Her consultation hours are 2-4 pm on Tuesdays in the town hall, Kirchstraße 5.

The **Foreigners' Registration Office for the district of Coesfeld** is responsible for any questions you may have regarding asylum seekers' law and the right of residence (<https://serviceportal.kreis-coesfeld.de/suche/-/egov-bis->

[detail/einrichtung/53/show](#)). The Integration Officer can help you apply for a residence permit or renew an existing permit. Extensions for permits or suspensions of deportation can also be applied for through the Integration Officer.

The **parishes** in Olfen are also available to speak to and offer various forms of help along with pastoral and spiritual services. The Protestant Christus parish at Von-Vincke-Straße 21 offers services such as ecumenical lunches. The Catholic parish of St. Vitus at Kirchstraße 17 has a parish charity committee that offers financial support in the case of an emergency.

### More contact information:

- Youth Migration Service in Dülmen  
(<https://www.jugendmigrationsdienste.de/jmd/duelmen>)
- General Social Assistance in Olfen  
(<https://www.vitus-olfen.de/personen-gruppen/gruppen-vereine/sozialberatung/#:~:text=Die%20Beratung%20wird%201%20x,die%20Beratung%20im%20evangelischen%20Gemeindehaus.>)
- Migration/Integration Service from Sozialdienst katholischer Frauen e.V. (<https://skf-luedinghausen.de/fachdienst-fuer-migration-integration>)
- Integration and Migration Service provided by Caritasverband für den Kreis Coesfeld e.V.  
(<https://www.caritas->

[coesfeld.de/hilfen/integration-migration/integration-migration](https://coesfeld.de/hilfen/integration-migration/integration-migration))

- Repatriation Advice (<https://www.drk-coe.de/angebote/existenzsichernde-hilfe/fachstelle-integration.html>)